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EUR/SOV FOR TOM SIMONS
USCINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PREL, UR, JA
SUBJECT: JAPANESE POLICY TOWARD THE USSR

REF: A. TOKYO 22961; B. TOKYO 22738; C. TOKYO 21423;
D. TOKYO 19382; E. TOKYO 18437; F. TOKYO 17914;
G. TOKYO 10524

1. (C) ENTIRE TEXT.

2. SUMMARY: JAPAN'S RELATIONS WITH THE USSR HAVE BEEN TROUBLED BY THE SOVIET OCCUPATION OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORIES SINCE 1945 AND MORE RECENTLY BY AFGHANISTAN, THE KAL INCIDENT AND THE SOVIET MILITARY BUILD-UP IN THE FAR EAST. AGAINST AN EVEN BROADER BACKDROP, THE STATE OF U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS ALSO EXERTS A GREAT INFLUENCE ON JAPAN'S RELATIONS WITH MOSCOW, GIVEN THE GOJ'S EXTREMELY CLOSE POLITICAL/ECONOMIC/MILITARY TIES TO THE U.S. PM NAKASONE BELIEVES THAT U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS ARE BOUND TO GET BETTER SOONER RATHER THAN LATER AND, THEREFORE, THE GOJ HAS BEEN STEPPING UP ITS DIALOGUE WITH MOSCOW OVER THE LAST NINE MONTHS IN ORDER TO TRY TO MOVE FORWARD ON THE BILATERAL AGENDA AND TO PREVENT JAPAN FROM BEING LEFT BEHIND THE U.S. AND WEST EUROPEANS IN ANY EAST-WEST WARMING. WHILE NEITHER THE GOJ NOR THE JAPANESE PEOPLE HAVE ANY MISPERCEPTIONS ABOUT SOVIET POLICIES AND AIMS, PM NAKASONE IS CLEARLY INTERESTED IN ATTEMPTING TO ACHIEVE A DIPLOMATIC BREAKTHROUGH IN REGARD TO THE NORTHERN TERRITORIES ISSUE BY PRESSING THE SOVIETS TO AT LEAST ACKNOWLEDGE THE EXISTENCE OF THE PROBLEM. MOFA PROFESSIONALS HAVE FORGED A STRONG POLICY OF LINKAGE BETWEEN RESOLUTION OF THE TERRITORIAL ISSUE AND IMPROVED RELATIONS AND SO FAR NAKASONE HAS FOLLOWED THIS POLICY IN HIS DEALINGS WITH THE SOVIETS. HOWEVER, WE BELIEVE NAKASONE IS STRONGLY TUGGED BY THE DESIRE TO "DO SOMETHING" WITH THE SOVIETS IN ORDER TO LEAVE HIS MARK IN JAPANESE HISTORY. THEREFORE, MOFA PROFESSIONALS WILL HAVE TO MAINTAIN THEIR PRESSURE ON NAKASONE NOT TO BACK AWAY FROM THE TERRITORIAL ISSUE IN ORDER TO GAIN A CHIMERIC AND SUPERFICIAL UPSWING IN BILATERAL TIES. FROM MOFA'S VIEW, THE KEY NEXT STEP FOR AN IMPROVEMENT IN RELATIONS WOULD BE A VISIT TO TOKYO

BY GROMYKO, DURING WHICH HE WOULD BE PREPARED TO DISCUSS THE TERRITORIAL ISSUE IN OTHER THAN ABSOLUTELY NEGATIVE TERMS. SO FAR THE SOVIETS HAVE STONEWALLED ON THIS DURING RECENT MEETINGS BETWEEN NAKASONE AND/OR ABE AND GROMYKO, PREMIER TIKHONOV AND POLITBURO MEMBER KUNAYEV. HOWEVER, MOMENTUM APPEARS TO BE GROWING FOR A GROMYKO VISIT AND THE QUESTION REMAINS HOW THE TERRITORIAL ISSUE WILL BE ADDRESSED IF A VISIT TAKES PLACE. EVEN IF SOME SORT OF A BREAK-THROUGH WERE TO BE ACHIEVED WITH RESPECT TO THE TERRITORIAL AND OTHER ISSUES, JAPAN'S FIRM ALLIANCE WITH THE U.S. WOULD NOT BE AFFECTED AND JAPAN'S FUNDAMENTAL FOREIGN POLICY OUTLOOK WOULD REMAIN CONSTANT. END SUMMARY.

SETTING:

3. FOMIN ABE'S MEETING WITH GROMYKO AT THE UNGA, THE VISIT OF POLITBURO KUNAYEV TO JAPAN AND PM NAKASONE'S MEETING WITH SOVIET PREMIER TIKHONOV AT THE GANDHI FUNERAL DID NOT SPECIFICALLY ADVANCE JAPAN-SOVIET RELATIONS. HOWEVER, IT IS PART OF A PROCESS BY WHICH THE GOJ UNDER PM NAKASONE HAS RECENTLY BEEN SIGNALING ITS DESIRE TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH MOSCOW, WHILE NOT LOSING SIGHT OF ITS LONG-TERM OBJECTIVE -- THE REVERSION OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORIES. HAVING DEVOTED HIMSELF TO FURTHER STRENGTHENING JAPAN'S TIES TO THE U.S. AND THE WEST IN GENERAL DURING HIS FIRST TWO-YEAR TERM IN OFFICE, PM NAKASONE IS NOW IN A POSITION TO TURN GREATER ATTENTION TO JAPAN'S TIES WITH THE USSR, WHICH REMAIN JAPAN'S FUNDAMENTAL UNRESOLVED BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP.

4. NAKASONE'S CLEAR COMMITMENT TO WESTERN UNITY, AS EXEMPLIFIED BY HIS STANDS AT THE WILLIAMSBURG AND LONDON ECONOMIC SUMMITS, HAS MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR HIM TO BEGIN

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CONDUCTING A MORE ACTIVE DIALOGUE WITH MOSCOW AS JAPAN'S CREDENTIALS AS A "MEMBER OF THE WEST" ARE UNASSAILABLE. ALTHOUGH JAPAN VIEWS ITS RELATIONS WITH MOSCOW AS HAVING A DIMENSION APART FROM THE EAST-WEST CONTEXT, IN VIEW OF THE TERRITORIAL ISSUE AND THE CLOSE GEOGRAPHIC PROXIMITY OF THE TWO COUNTRIES, JAPAN-SOVIET RELATIONS DO NOT, OF COURSE, EXIST IN A VACUUM. PROGRESS WILL BE GREATLY INFLUENCED BY THE COURSE OF U.S.-SOVIET AND EAST-WEST RELATIONS IN GENERAL. WE BELIEVE NAKASONE SENSES THAT U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS WILL BEGIN TO MOVE FORWARD SOONER RATHER THAN LATER AND WILL PROVIDE JAPAN WITH THE PROPER SETTING FOR ATTEMPTING TO PUT ITS RELATIONS WITH THE USSR ON A BETTER FOOTING -- WITHIN CLEAR LIMITS. IN THIS, IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT NAKASONE IS UNDER NO OVERRIDING DOMESTIC POLITICAL PRESSURE TO BE NICE TO THE SOVIETS, BUT THE JAPANESE GENERALLY FAVOR DIALOGUE OVER CONFRONTATION.

BACKGROUND

5. HISTORICAL ANTIPATHY. FOR JAPAN, THE USSR (AND THE EARLIER RUSSIAN IMPERIAL REGIME) HAVE BEEN A PRINCIPAL GEOPOLITICAL THREAT SINCE BEFORE THE 1904-5 RUSSO-JAPANESE WAR. CULTURAL DIFFERENCES AND, IN THE POST-WAR PERIOD, WIDELY DIVERGENT SOCIO-POLITICAL SYSTEMS BETWEEN THE TWO NATIONS HAVE ADDED TO A DIFFICULT RELATIONSHIP. IN RECENT HISTORY, THE SOVIET ABROGATION OF ITS 1941 NON-AGGRESSION TREATY AND SUBSEQUENT DECLARATION OF WAR ON JAPAN IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE NUCLEAR ATTACKS ON HIROSHIMA AND NAGASAKI AND THE ENSUING SOVIET OCCUPATION OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORIES, COUPLED WITH THE EXTREMELY HARSH TREATMENT OF TENS OF THOUSANDS OF JAPANESE POWS HELD FOR YEARS AFTER THE WAR, INSTILLED IN THE JAPANESE PUBLIC A PROFOUNDLY NEGATIVE ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE SOVIETS. THIS HAS BEEN RECENTLY REINFORCED BY SUCH ACTS AS THE AFGHANISTAN INVASION, THE KAL-007 INCIDENT AND THE BUILD-UP IN SOVIET MILITARY STRENGTH IN ASIA, INCLUDING IN THE

6. AS EVIDENCE OF THE JAPANESE ANTIPATHY TOWARDS THE SOVIETS, A RECENT NATIONWIDE POLL CONDUCTED BY THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE REVEALED THAT MORE THAN 85 PERCENT OF THOSE POLLED INDICATED THEY DID NOT FEEL FRIENDLY TOWARDS THE USSR AND MOST OF THOSE QUESTIONED CITED THE NORTHERN TERRITORIES PROBLEMS AS THE REASON FOR THEIR FEELINGS. IN ORDER TO PLACE THIS ANTIPATHY IN THE PROPER PERSPECTIVE THE SECOND MOST-DISLIKED COUNTRY WAS NORTH KOREA, WHICH WAS VERY UNPOPULAR WITH AROUND 32 PERCENT OF THOSE QUESTIONED. ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN THE PM'S POLL REVEALED THAT OVER 75 PERCENT OF THE JAPANESE FEEL FRIENDLY TOWARDS THE U.S.

7. THE NORTHERN TERRITORIES PROBLEM: THE NORTHERN TERRITORIES ARE COMPRISED OF THE FOUR SOUTHERNMOST ISLANDS OF THE KURILE CHAIN. THESE ISLANDS, UNDER JAPANESE CONTROL SINCE AROUND 1800, WERE OCCUPIED BY THE SOVIETS IN THE FINAL DAYS OF WORLD WAR II AND REMAIN UNDER SOVIET CONTROL TO THIS DATE, DESPITE JAPAN'S INSISTENCE UPON THEIR REVERSION. JAPAN RELINQUISHED CONTROL OVER THE KURILE ISLANDS IN THE TREATY OF SAN FRANCISCO IN 1952 BUT MAINTAINS, WITH GOOD HISTORICAL JUSTIFICATION, THAT THE FOUR ISLANDS IMMEDIATELY NORTH OF HOKKAIDO ARE NOT PART OF THE KURILES ACQUIRED AFTER THE RUSSO-JAPANESE WAR. THE U.S. SUPPORTS THIS POSITION. ALTHOUGH THERE IS NO JAPANESE POPULATION LEFT ON THE ISLANDS AND THE ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES

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OF THEIR LOSS ARE MINIMAL (PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF THE SIGNIFICANT ACCESS TO FISHING GROUNDS THE SOVIETS GIVE TO JAPANESE FISHERMEN), THERE IS WIDESPREAD SUPPORT IN JAPAN FOR RETURN OF THE TERRITORIES. THE EXTREME RIGHT IN JAPAN IS MOST VOCAL ON THIS ISSUE, BUT IN FACT RETURN OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORIES IS ONE OF THE FEW FOREIGN POLICY QUESTIONS UPON WHICH ALL JAPANESE POLITICAL PARTIES, INCLUDING THE COMMUNISTS, AGREE.

8. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT THE GOJ HAS ALSO USED THE NORTHERN TERRITORIES ISSUE, PARTICULARLY THE SOVIET MILITARY BUILD-UP ON THE ISLANDS, AS A MEANS OF DRAWING JAPANESE PUBLIC ATTENTION TO THE SOVIET THREAT AND TO GARNER PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR THE SECURITY RELATIONSHIP WITH THE U.S. AND THE NEED FOR JAPAN TO INCREASE ITS SELF-DEFENSE CAPABILITY. NOW THAT THERE IS A GROWING CONSENSUS ON THE ABOVE, THE GOJ MIGHT BEGIN GRADUALLY TO DE-EMPHASIZE THE NORTHERN TERRITORIES ISSUE TO ALLOW FOR SOMEWHAT WARMER RELATIONS WITH MOSCOW. NO JAPANESE GOVERNMENT, HOWEVER, COULD AGREE TO SET ASIDE COMPLETELY THE NORTHERN TERRITORIES ISSUE WITHOUT OPENING ITSELF TO CHARGE FROM ACROSS THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM THAT IT HAD SOLD OUT THE NATIONAL POLITICAL PATRIMONY.

9. THE GOJ HAS PERSISTED OVER THE YEARS IN ATTEMPTING TO REGAIN THE ISLANDS THROUGH NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE SOVIETS, BUT WITHOUT SUCCESS. IN 1973, THE GOJ MAINTAINS THAT BREZHNEV INDICATED TO PM TANAKA THAT THE ISSUE REMAINED OPEN TO DISCUSSION. HOWEVER, BREZHNEV'S FLEXIBILITY WAS SOON REPLACED WITH THE OBDURATE SOVIET CONTENTION THAT THE SUBJECT IS SETTLED AND THE TERRITORY IS, AND WILL REMAIN, SOVIET. IN RECENT YEARS, THE GOJ HAS INCREASED ITS EFFORTS TO FOCUS ATTENTION ON THE ISSUE AND HAS FORGED THE CONCEPT THAT THE RETURN OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORIES IS A SINE QUA NON FOR ANY SUBSTANTIAL IMPROVEMENT

IN JAPANESE SOVIET RELATIONS.

10. ECONOMIC/COMMERCIAL INTERESTS: TRADE BETWEEN JAPAN AND THE USSR HAS BEEN DECREASING STEADILY SINCE THE CONCLUSION OF JAPANESE PARTICIPATION IN MAJOR DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN SIBERIA IN THE 1970'S. THOUGH TRADE WAS FURTHER HINDERED BY THE GOJ'S TRADE SANCTIONS, PRIMARILY THE BAN ON OFFICIAL CREDITS, RESULTING FROM THE SOVIET INVASION OF AFGHANISTAN, WE -- AND MANY JAPANESE -- BELIEVE THAT THE SOVIETS HAVE OVERSTATED THE IMPACT THAT POLITICAL SANCTIONS HAVE HAD ON THE ECONOMIC SITUATION. ALTHOUGH THE GOJ HAS NOW STATED THAT IT WOULD OPEN UP OFFICIAL CREDITS "ON A CASE-BY-CASE BASIS," TOGETHER WITH OTHER WESTERN STATES, THE SOVIETS HAVE YET TO PROPOSE MAJOR PROJECTS WHICH INTEREST JAPANESE BUSINESS. THE SIBERIAN PROJECTS OF THE 1970'S INCLUDED TRANSFER OF RAW MATERIALS TO THE JAPANESE. HOWEVER, SINCE DEMAND FOR SUCH COMMODITIES IN JAPAN IS LOW AT PRESENT, JAPANESE BUSINESSMAN, WHILE READY TO RESPOND IF OPPORTUNITIES ARISE, ARE NOT UNDER ECONOMIC PRESSURE TO MAKE MAJOR COMMITMENTS TO THE SOVIET MARKET. THERE MAY BE NEW DEVELOPMENTS OF THE DECEMBER JAPAN-SOVIET ECONOMIC COMMITTEE MEETING IN TOKYO, BUT NO DRAMATIC PROGRESS IS EXPECTED.

THE CURRENT SCENE:

11. GOJ OBJECTIVES: MOFA PROFESSIONALS BELIEVE THAT THE SOVIETS SEE RELATIONS WITH JAPAN AS BASICALLY AN ADJUNCT TO THE GREATER U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONSHIP AND DO NOT GIVE MUCH WEIGHT TO IMPROVING RELATIONS WITH JAPAN ON A BILATERAL BASIS. IN ADDITION, MOFA BELIEVES THAT THE

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SOVIETS ARE CONVINCED THAT JAPAN CAN BEST BE HANDLED BY INTIMIDATION AND STONE-WALLING ON BASIC ISSUES. THIS BELIEF WAS REINFORCED RECENTLY BY SOVIET POLITBURO KUNAYEV'S OPEN CRITICISM OF JAPAN'S SUBSERVIENCE TO THE U.S. ON FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES DURING HIS VISIT TO TOKYO AND PREMIER TIKHONOV'S INFLEXIBLE STANCE IN HIS MEETING WITH NAKASONE AT THE GANDHI FUNERAL IN EARLY NOVEMBER. IN VIEW OF THIS, MOFA PROFESSIONALS ARGUE THAT IN ORDER FOR MOSCOW TO BEGIN TAKING RELATIONS WITH JAPAN SERIOUSLY AND ON THEIR OWN MERITS, THE GOJ MUST CONTINUE TO DEMONSTRATE ITS DETERMINATION BY CONTINUING TO BUILD UP ITS DEFENSE FORCES, NOT CHASING AFTER THE SOVIETS AND RE-EMPHASIZING TO MOSCOW THE CRITICALITY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORIES ISSUE TO ANY FUNDAMENTAL IMPROVEMENT IN RELATIONS. THEREFORE, MOFA ATTACHES THE GREATEST IMPORTANCE TO THE GOJ LEADERSHIP'S WILLINGNESS AND ABILITY TO STAY THE COURSE.

12. GOJ TACTICS. A SERIES OF BILATERAL CONSULTATIONS WERE AGREED UPON DURING DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER NAKAJIMA'S VISIT TO MOSCOW IN MARCH OF THIS YEAR (TOKYO 5183). FROM THE JAPANESE SIDE, THE CONCEPTUAL IMPETUS WAS PROVIDED BY MOFA'S SOVIET DIVISION, WHICH BELIEVES IT NECESSARY TO ESTABLISH AND NURTURE A WIDE-RANGING (BUT CONTROLLED) DIALOGUE WITH THE SOVIETS AS A MINIMAL FORM OF COMMUNICATION TO PLACATE DOMESTIC PRESSURE AND TO HELP BREAK DOWN THE SOVIETS' SELF-IMPOSED ISOLATION TOWARDS JAPAN AND THE WEST. AS WE HAVE REPORTED SINCE MARCH, THESE BILATERAL EXCHANGES, CONSULTATIONS, AND OTHER CONTACTS HAVE BEEN CARRIED OUT MORE OR LESS AS SCHEDULED.

13. MOFA

STRESSED THAT JAPAN'S PRINCIPAL FOREIGN POLICY OBJECTIVE VIS-A-VIS THE USSR REMAINS THE REVERSION

OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY AND THAT ALL JAPANESE PARTICIPANTS IN THE DIALOGUE, GOVERNMENTAL AND PRIVATE, MUST KEEP THIS OBJECTIVE CLEARLY IN MIND IN THEIR DEALINGS WITH THE SOVIETS. IN ADDITION, DEVELOPING A DIALOGUE WITH MOSCOW RESPONDS TO PM NAKASONE'S INTEREST IN SETTING THE STAGE FOR A MORE BASIC IMPROVEMENT IN JAPAN-SOVIET RELATIONS IN THE LAST TWO YEARS OF HIS TERM OF OFFICE.

OUTLOOK:

14. MOFA'S SCENARIO: NOW THAT THE TWO SIDES HAVE RESUMED PERSONNEL EXCHANGES AND OTHER BILATERAL CONTACTS, MOFA BELIEVES THAT THE NEXT APPROPRIATE STEP IS FOR GROMYKO TO VISIT JAPAN, SOMETHING HE HAS NOT DONE SINCE 1976, WHILE THERE HAVE BEEN INNUMERABLE VISITS TO MOSCOW BY JAPANESE FOREIGN MINISTERS. A GROMYKO VISIT WOULD CLEARLY SIGNAL MOSCOW'S INTEREST IN BETTER TIES AND WOULD CLEAR THE WAY FOR A POSSIBLE JAPAN-SOVIET SUMMIT. HOWEVER, GROMYKO HAS CONTINUED TO DECLINE INVITATIONS ON THE GROUNDS THAT CONDITIONS ARE NOT "RIPE" FOR A VISIT. WHEN HE MET WITH ABE AT THE UNGA, HE NOTED ILL-HUMOREDLY THAT THE JAPANESE WOULD INEVITABLY RAISE THE NORTHERN TERRITORIES AND RUIN THE VISIT. THUS, THERE WAS NO SENSE IN HIS VISITING JAPAN FOR THE TIME BEING. ABE RESPONDED THAT THERE ARE OTHER ISSUES, IN ADDITION TO THE NORTHERN TERRITORIES, WHICH COULD BE DISCUSSED BETWEEN GROMYKO AND HIS COUNTERPART IN TOKYO. PREMIER TIKHONOV, IN TURN, REITERATED THE UNBENDING SOVIET LINE ON THE TERRITORIAL QUESTION DURING HIS MEETING WITH NAKASONE AT THE GANDHI FUNERAL IN EARLY NOVEMBER.

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15. THE NEXT STEP IN MOFA'S EYES WOULD BE TO NUDGE THE SOVIETS BACK INTO CONCEDING THAT THE NORTHERN TERRITORIES ISSUE REMAINS OPEN, AS LAST ALLEGEDLY ACKNOWLEDGED BY BREZHNEV TO PM TANAKA IN 1973 (AT LEAST AS THE GOJ INTERPRETS THE DISCUSSIONS AT THIS SUMMIT). AT THE SAME TIME, MOFA OFFICIALS ARE WARY OF ANY SOVIET GAMBIT, SUCH AS SUGGESTING "INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS" ON THE TERRITORIAL ISSUE, WHICH WOULD IN EFFECT PUT THIS ISSUE ON THE SHELF AND PRECLUDE SERIOUS DISCUSSIONS.

16. EVEN WITHOUT A GROMYKO VISIT, THE JAPAN-SOVIET DIALOGUE IS SCHEDULED TO BE CONTINUED. PLANS ARE CURRENTLY UNDERWAY FOR SOVIET MINISTER OF CULTURE DEMICHEV TO VISIT JAPAN IN JANUARY, AT WHICH TIME A BILATERAL CULTURAL AGREEMENT, ESSENTIALLY PUT ON "HOLD" SINCE AFGHANISTAN, WILL LIKELY BE SIGNED. WE ALSO UNDERSTAND THAT THE SOVIET DELEGATION TO THE JAPAN-SOVIET ECONOMIC COMMITTEE MEETING IN TOKYO NEXT MONTH MAY BE HEADED BY A POLITBURO MEMBER OR AT LEAST BY MINISTER FOR FOREIGN TRADE PATOLICHEV.

17. THE POLITICAL DIMENSION:

WHILE MOFA PROFESSIONALS AND OTHERS KNOWLEDGEABLE

ABOUT THE USSR TEND TO TAKE THE LONG VIEW THAT JAPAN SHOULD WITHHOLD A SUBSTANTIAL IMPROVEMENT IN RELATIONS UNTIL THE USSR MAKES SOME GESTURE ON THE TERRITORIAL ISSUE, JAPANESE POLITICIANS, EXEMPLIFIED BY PM NAKASONE, ARE CLEARLY ATTRACTED TO A DRAMATIC STEP BY JAPAN DESIGNED TO ACHIEVE A BREAKTHROUGH OR AT LEAST MAKE A START AT RESOLVING THE IMPASSE, EVEN THOUGH THEY HAVE A PRAGMATIC APPRECIATION OF THE DIFFICULTIES IN SUCCEEDING AT SUCH A TASK. NAKASONE CLEARLY HAS INDICATED THAT HE WOULD LIKE TO VISIT MOSCOW AND MEET WITH HIS SOVIET COUNTERPART. HE WOULD LIKE TO BE REMEMBERED AS A PM WHO BEGAN THE PROCESS OF RESOLVING JAPAN'S LONG-TRoubLED RELATIONS WITH ITS POWERFUL NORTHERN NEIGHBOR.

18. THE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT WILL HAVE A MAJOR EFFECT ON NAKASONE'S INTEREST IN "DOING SOMETHING" ON JAPAN-SOVIET RELATIONS. PRESIDENT REAGAN'S MEETING WITH GROMYKO STIMULATED AND REINFORCED NAKASONE'S INTEREST IN THE GOJ'S TAKING ADDITIONAL STEPS TO BRING SOME FORWARD MOVEMENT INTO ITS RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIETS. GIVEN NAKASONE'S PERSONAL INTEREST IN BETTER BILATERAL TIES WITH MOSCOW, HE DOES NOT WANT JAPAN TO BE LEFT BEHIND AT THE STARTING GATE IF THE GENERAL EAST-WEST ATMOSPHERE WARMS UP. FOREIGN MINISTER ABE -- WHO HAS JUST BEEN REAPPOINTED AND WHO IS ACTIVELY INTERESTED IN BECOMING PRIME MINISTER -- WILL ALSO BE MONITORING THESE DEVELOPMENTS CLOSELY FOR THE SAME REASONS. IN VIEW OF THIS, IF A U.S.-SOVIET SUMMIT WERE TO TAKE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 06 OF 06 TOKYO 23329

EUR/SOV FOR TOM SIMONS

USCINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR

TAGS: PREL. UR. JA

SUBJECT: JAPANESE POLICY TOWARD THE USSR

PLACE AND WEST EUROPEAN LEADERS WERE ALSO TO MEET

WITH THEIR SOVIET COUNTERPART DURING THE NEXT TWO YEARS.

THIS WOULD SHARPLY INCREASE PRESSURE ON THE JAPANESE

TO DO LIKEWISE IN ORDER NOT TO LOSE "FACE" IN THE

INTERNATIONAL ARENA. MOFA'S NIGHTMARE IS THAT THIS

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KIND OF IMPETUS COULD, IN THE END, OVERRIDE THE

NORTHERN TERRITORIES ISSUE FOR THE SHORT TERM AND

LEAD NAKASONE AND ABE TO GO TO MOSCOW WITHOUT ANY

GUARANTEES OF PROGRESS ON THAT ISSUE. SIMPLY TO

PREVENT JAPAN'S BECOMING THE "ODD MAN OUT" IN THE

WEST'S OVERALL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SOVIETS.

19. CONCLUSION: THAT NAKASONE WANTS TO CUT THE GORDIAN
KNOT OF JAPANESE-SOVIET RELATIONS IS CLEAR. AND HE HAS

OPENLY SIGNALLED TO MOSCOW HIS WILLINGNESS TO IMPROVE TIES.

AS A MOFA SOVIET DIVISION OFFICIAL EXPRESSED IT RECENTLY.

THE GOJ HAS MADE ITS INTENTION CLEAR: NOW IT IS UP TO THE

SOVIETS TO RESPOND. IF THEY DO NOT REACT POSITIVELY,

MOFA OFFICIALS HOPE THE GOJ WILL STAND PAT AND POINT OUT

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THAT JAPAN HAD EXTENDED ITS HAND AND THE ONUS FOR CONTINUED COOL RELATIONS MUST BE BORNE BY MOSCOW. HOWEVER, THERE WILL BE A CONTINUING TUG OF WAR BETWEEN THE SUPERFICIAL POLITICAL APPEAL OF TAKING AN INITIATIVE TO RESOLVE THIS TROUBLED RELATIONSHIP WITH A POWERFUL NEIGHBOR. AND THE MORE RATIONAL CALCULATING BY MOFA PROFESSIONALS THAT JAPAN'S LONG TERM INTERESTS WILL BE SERVED BY HOLDING BACK UNTIL MOSCOW IS READY TO GIVE SOME GROUND ON THE FUNDAMENTAL TERRITORIAL ISSUE. IN ADDITION, ANY MAJOR DECISIONS BY TOKYO TO IMPROVE TIES WILL BE HEAVILY INFLUENCED BY DEVELOPMENTS IN EAST-WEST RELATIONS IN GENERAL AND IN U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS IN PARTICULAR. EVEN IN THE UNLIKELY EVENT SOME KIND OF A BREAKTHROUGH WERE TO BE MADE IN CONNECTION WITH THE NORTHERN TERRITORIES, ALLOWING A SUBSTANTIAL IMPROVEMENT IN JAPAN-SOVIET RELATIONS, THIS WOULD NOT THREATEN JAPAN'S FUNDAMENTAL POLITICAL ORIENTATION AS A "MEMBER OF THE WEST" AND AS AN ALLY OF THE U.S.

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